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ABSTRACT

Clothing of the nineteenth century and its reflection of the middle class ideals of how men and women should look is the focus of this publication. Through a series of activities, students are encouraged to think about the interaction of clothing and society, both past and present. Worksheets accompany lessons: "A Change of Clothes" and "Clothing Trends." The third lesson plan has students identifying elements of modern clothing and evaluating the relationship between clothing and self-identity with a Take Home Page, "Personal Clothing Inventory," given in English and Spanish. The document concludes with suggested "Resources." (MM)

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ART to ZOO

TEACHING WITH THE POWER OF OBJECTS

Inside

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Subjects

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PERFECTLY SUITED: Clothing and Social Change in America

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PERFECTLY SUITED:
Clothing and Social Change in America

Mistake a woman's outfit for a man's in mid-nineteenth-century America? Impossible! What a man wore was very different from what a woman wore, just as a man's work at the time was quite different from a woman's.

Men were dressing in coats as dark as the soot from the factory chimneys that were sprouting up around the country, in layers of thick suiting over long woolen underwear that padded them out into a shape that looked solid and mature. They looked older. They looked responsible. By the 1800s, they were hiding any vestiges of boyishness behind heavy beards, mustaches, and great fluffy sideburns.

Women, on the other hand, looked decidedly different. They were brightly colored and lavishly decorated. Their tiny waists were created by tight-laced corsets and set off by bell-shaped floor-length skirts made full and wide by several layers of petticoats underneath.

Why did men and women dress so distinctly? Their garments reflected personal choices and a prevailing cultural view of men and women as complementary opposites, suited to play separate roles in life.

Clothing of the nineteenth century and its reflection of middle-class ideals of how men and women should look is the focus of this issue of *Art to Zoo*. Through a series of activities, your students will be encouraged to think about the interaction of clothing and society, both past and present.

SEPARATE SPHERES

Most Americans in the mid-1800s took for granted that men and women were different from each other. Men were seen as strong and competitive, women as fragile and gentle. Nature, it seemed, had made *men's sphere the world of enterprise; women's, the home.*

Some men were beginning to work in the rapidly expanding world of commerce. New modes of transportation—railroads, steamboats, and canals—created a national network that led to an expansion of commercial centers such as New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and New Orleans. In these places, businesses looked for men who were dependable, respectable, and professional.

Men wore clothing that suited them for business, clothing that made them look serious and successful. When a man put on his conservative heavy coat and trousers, he was packaging himself to be marketable in the world of production and trade.

In contrast, when a woman wore lavish, colorful, and restrictive clothing she was dressing herself for the parlor, the drawing room—the home. Even if she did hard physical work in her household, as most women did, her clothing said she was a lady of leisure and her husband a successful "breadwinner."

Clothing reformers and feminists alike attacked corsets and heavy skirts as encumbrances. They claimed that corsets compressed a woman's organs and prevented her rib cage from growing to its full size. They further noted that long skirts collected dirt and rain-water from the streets, and were heavy and easy to trip over. But these practical observations were not accompanied by immediate change in the clothing of most women.

An example of bloomers worn

CHANGING ROLES, CHANGING CLOTHING

By the late 1800s, the clothing requirements of some men and women began to change. Underlying this change of fashion was the enormous economic transformation that the United States underwent after the Civil War. By the 1890s, rapid industrial growth led to the creation of massive corporations too large for one owner (or even a small group of owners) to finance and manage effectively. Stockholders hired professional managers to oversee financial policy and to supervise hundreds of new office employees—accountants, bookkeepers, payroll clerks, typists, and file clerks.

Many of the people who filled these new jobs moved from farms to urban industrial centers to work in the offices of railroads, heavy industries, manufacturers,

Some clothing, like that worn by this miner in 1903, has changed little over time.

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by some women in the 1890s.

and retailers. Although the majority of office workers were men, by 1900 a growing number of them were unmarried women. These "working girls" took pride in their work and independence, although most quit their jobs when they married.

Whether male or female, office workers needed to look well-dressed on the job. However, most didn't earn enough money to pay tailors or seamstresses, nor did they have much time for sewing or fittings. They needed clothing that looked appropriate for work but that was inexpensive, easy to acquire and care for, and comfortable to move around in. Convenience became a high priority.

Mass-produced clothing increasingly met these needs by the 1880s and 1890s. For men, sack suits, which looked quite similar to the business suits men wear today, replaced heavy formal frock coats. Under these suits men wore detachable collars and cuffs on their shirts so they could do less laundry, yet appear to have "starched whites." A female version of the male suit became popular by the 1890s, as did a "shirtwaist," or tailored shirt to wear underneath. Over time, softer, more informal styles continued to be accepted into the office environment.

SPORTS AND FITNESS

As more urban middle-class Americans spent their working hours at sedentary jobs, many became preoccupied with physical fitness and sports as a way to maintain or restore health and vitality. Sports also offered people new ways to socialize outside the workplace. Of the many popular sports in the late 1800s, bicycling probably had the most dramatic impact on clothing—especially women's clothing—largely because this sport was so public.

Women could not ride bicycles wearing heavy skirts and petticoats. Instead, they started to wear shorter skirts, divided skirts, and even "bloomers" (a full trouser that gathered at the knee). Women wearing bloomers were often ridiculed, but shorter skirts did gradually become accepted as Americans in the cities and countryside became accustomed to seeing women wearing them on public thoroughfares.

AND TO OUR TIME...

Changes in clothing in the second half of the nineteenth century were gradual and subtle. Not everyone adopted new clothing styles at the same time. While larger social and economic forces certainly influenced clothing, they alone didn't *cause* changes in style. Clothing isn't that simple. People's personal tastes and needs also influence what they wear.

Today's clothing styles arguably display more diversity and offer more choices than the fashions of any other time in history. Mass production and increasingly accessible retailing have made it easier for people to craft their own individual fashion styles. The challenge for future historians will be to decipher what this array of fashions might communicate about our lives and times.

A middle-class woman's suit, circa 1905.

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LESSON PLAN
Step 1

A CHANGE OF CLOTHES

Objectives

- Evaluate drawings as historical sources.
- Identify elements of nineteenth-century men's and women's clothing.

Materials

- Copies of "A Change of Clothes" worksheet, page 7.
- Pens or pencils.

Subjects

- Social studies, language arts

Procedure

1. Ask your students how a historian might be able to learn about the past. Answers will vary—students may indicate books, artifacts, documents, or video and audio recordings. Mention (if your students have not already done so) that people's clothing can also tell a historian a great deal about the past, including the roles of men and women in society.

2. Give each student a copy of the "Change of Clothes" worksheet. Tell your students that they will be looking at two nineteenth-century scenes for clues about the roles of men and women over time. Direct your students' attention first to the drawing of a family group from the 1850s.

3. Divide the class into two groups. One group will study the man's clothes, the other the woman's. *(Try to avoid placing all the girls in one group and all the boys in the other.)* Ask the students to observe the physical appearance of the clothing, encouraging them to look closely at the outfits. After the students have observed the drawing, have them complete the questions on the worksheet. Next, have each group share their observations, comparing and contrasting the two outfits. Encourage your students to think about how it might have felt to wear this clothing. How comfortable might these outfits have been? Do they encourage you to stand or move in a certain way? Could you walk easily in these outfits? How fragile are these clothes? Could they be easily crushed, torn, or dirtied?

4. Continue the activity by asking your students to think about men's and women's roles in the 1850s. Who was expected to be more physically active—men or women? Who was expected to be more independent? Who was expected to spend more time on appearance? Who was thought of as more delicate? Who was thought of as more serious? For each question, be sure your students explain what it is about the clothing that leads them to answer as they do.

5. Ask your students to examine the late-nineteenth-century advertisement for clues about the roles men and women played in society. Tell the students that the United States was undergoing tremendous economic and social changes as it became one of the world's leading industrial powers. This transformation affected how men and women spent their time—and, of course, how they dressed. Repeat procedures 2 and 3 using the back of the worksheet as an answer space. After the two groups have reassembled and shared their findings, enrich their understanding by having them briefly compare the overall appearance of the people in the two pictures (their body build, posture, etc.) and their surroundings. Note how different the late-nineteenth-century setting is from that of the 1850s. The surroundings have become urban and impersonal, as a crowd of workers—now including both men and women, hurry along on their lunch hours. They seem to be moving more quickly in a world that has become increasingly commercial.

6. Conclude the activity by repeating procedure 4 for the late-nineteenth-century advertisement. Answers will vary. Some students may have difficulty observing differences between men's and women's roles. Be sure to emphasize that as more women entered the workforce, the differences in function between men's and women's clothing decreased.

WORKSHEET 1
A Change of Clothes

Directions

Answer each question about the men's and women's clothing in the pictures as directed by your teacher.

An urban middle-class family of the 1850s.

1. How tight does this clothing appear?

2. How long is the garment?

3. How are the sleeves shaped?

The Noon Lunch Army
Do You Belong to it?
If you are a worker in the shop, in the office, or in the home you should eat a food that contains the phosphates and nitrates the brain and muscle makers prepared in a digestible form.
Many of the foods that are advertised as "builders of brawn and brain" are merely makers of fat. The ideal food for the desk man and for all indoor workers is
Shredded Whole Wheat
It contains in well balanced proportion the elements that build bone, brain and muscle and these are made digestible by steam-cooking, shredding and baking.
Two Shredded Wheat Biscuits (heated in oven) for lunch with "half and half" will supply all the energy needed for a half day's work and leaves a feeling of stomach comfort and satisfaction.
Shredded wheat with strawberries, raspberries or other fresh fruits and cream forms a lunch that is deliciously wholesome and nourishing. Try it tomorrow.
TRISCUIT, the shredded wheat TOAST, is crisp, snappy and nourishing just the thing for light luncheons, picnics or excursions.
The Shredded Wheat Company, Niagara Falls, N. Y.

Urban middle-class workers of the 1890s.

4. How many layers does the outfit appear to have?

5. Are there many decorations on the garments?

6. How closely does the outfit conform to the natural shape of the human body?

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LESSON PLAN
Step 2

THE CLOTHES LINE

Objectives

- Identify changes in clothing fashions over time.
- Construct a time line.
- Place documentary materials in historical context.

Materials

- Copies of "Clothing Trends" worksheets (cutout figures with "Historical Clues"), pages 9–11.
- Scissors.
- Markers, pens, or pencils.
- Contemporary magazines, history books, encyclopedias, or other reference works.
- Adhesive tape or glue.

Subjects

- Social studies, language arts

Procedure

1. Tell your students that they'll now be constructing a time line to discover how clothing fashions have changed over the past century. Encourage your students to observe elements of clothing that have changed for both men and women over time.

2. Give each student a pair of scissors (or ask students to share scissors) and copies of the "Clothing Trends" worksheets. Tell the students that each pair of figures is wearing a representative outfit for his/her time period. Ask the students to cut out the figures, being sure to keep the pairs (and accompanying historical clues) together.

3. Give each student two sheets of $8\frac{1}{2}$" x 11" plain paper (have them tape or glue the two pages together) or one longer sheet of paper. Tell your students to draw a time line like that on the "Historical Clues" worksheet, page 11. Next, tell them to place each pair of cutouts along the time line (with tape or glue), using the historical clues as a guide. Direct the students to history books, encyclopedias, or other reference works that have either photographs of period clothing or mention the historical clues provided.

4. After the students have placed the cutout figures on the time line, begin a class discussion on elements of clothing that have changed for both men and women. Students are likely to suggest that men's fashions have changed less than women's fashions during the twentieth century. Encourage your students to offer opinions on why certain elements of clothing have changed while others have not.

5. If time allows, extend the activity by having your students complete the time line to the present with cutout pictures from contemporary magazines or possibly with photographs (or photocopies of photographs) of themselves, friends, or relatives. You may also extend the time line backward to include images (photocopies from textbooks) of fashion from periods that the students have studied this year.

WORKSHEET 2
Clothing Trends

Historical Clues

Robert Fulton made the first successful steamboat.

The Lewis and Clark expedition explored parts of the vast Louisiana Purchase.

Thomas Jefferson was president of the United States.

Historical Clues

Commercial radio broadcasting began with KDKA in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Charles Lindbergh flew solo across the Atlantic in the *Spirit of St. Louis*.

The stock market crashed after a long economic boom.

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WORKSHEET 2
Clothing Trends

Historical Clues

Teddy Roosevelt was president of the United States.

The Wright brothers made the first controlled powered flight.

Subway trains, electric lights, and skyscrapers appeared in major American cities.

Historical Clues

Martin Luther King, Jr., emerged as a leader in the civil rights movement.

Rock 'n' roll music was popularized by musicians such as Elvis Presley.

The first artificial satellite was launched into orbit around the Earth.

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WORKSHEET 2
Clothing Trends

Historical Clues

California became the thirty-first state in the Union.

The United States and Japan began diplomatic relations.

Abraham Lincoln ran for the Illinois seat in the United States Senate. He lost to Stephen A. Douglas.

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LESSON PLAN
Step 3

MY CLOTHING

Objectives

- Identify elements of modern clothing.
- Evaluate the relationship between clothing and self-identity.

Materials

- Copies of the "Personal Clothing Inventory" worksheet, page 13.
- Pens, pencils, or markers.

Subjects

- Social studies, language arts

Procedure

1. Begin the lesson with a discussion of the very personal nature of clothing choices. Emphasize that what a person owns often provides a historian (through a household or personal inventory) with important insights into a person's life and times. Ask your students why they would or would not wear some of the clothing highlighted in "The Clothes Line" activity. Answers will vary, but most groups will mention the concept of "style." Be sure that your students understand that one's self-image is often depicted in and derived from one's wardrobe selections.

2. Give each student a copy of the "Personal Clothing Inventory" Take-Home Page. Tell your students that they will be surveying their wardrobes in an attempt to understand how clothing functions in their own lives.

3. After the students have completed the Take-Home Page, have them discuss their various motivations for wearing specific styles of clothing. Students will probably mention that clothes can express a person's desire to "fit in" or "stand out." Some students may even observe that the differences between male and female clothing are not as distinct as they were in the nineteenth century.

4. Finish the activity by emphasizing that clothing has always told us a great deal about people and the society they live in. Ask your students to conclude what the clothes they wear today (to school) tell us about our society. Answers will vary, but most groups will conclude that comfort, mobility, and individual expression are important in the clothing choices they make.

TAKE-HOME PAGE
Personal Clothing Inventory

To the teacher

■ Duplicate this page for students.

Publication of *Art to Zoo* is made possible through the generous support of the Pacific Mutual Foundation.

List 10 of your favorite items of clothing.

F1

F2

F3

F4

F5

F6

F7

F8

F9

F10

List 10 of your least favorite items of clothing.

L1

L2

L3

L4

L5

L6

L7

L8

L9

L10

Directions

Answer the following questions about these items.
Write the item numbers (e.g. F3, L2) on the line following the question.

1. Which items did you get because a friend of the same sex liked them?

2. Which items did you get because a friend of the opposite sex liked them?

3. Which items do you have that your parents do not like?

4. Which items did you get because a group of friends had them?

5. Which items are unlike anything owned or worn by anyone else you know?

6. Which items did you get because they were the "right" brand or label?

TRABAJO PARA HACER EN FAMILIA
Inventario de su Ropa

Al Profesor
■ Copie esta página para los alumnos.

Esta publicación ha sido posible gracias al aporte generoso de la Pacific Mutual Foundation.

Nombre 10 de sus más favoritos artículos de ropa.

F1

F2

F3

F4

F5

F6

F7

F8

F9

F10

Nombre 10 de sus menos favoritos artículos de ropa.

L1

L2

L3

L4

L5

L6

L7

L8

L9

L10

Instrucciones
Conteste las siguientes preguntas acerca de los artículos mencionados. Escriba el número que le corresponde al artículo (por ejemplo: F3, L2) en la línea frente a la pregunta.

1. ¿Qué artículos obtuvo porque le gustan a un amigo de su mismo sexo?

2. ¿Qué artículos obtuvo porque le gustan a un amigo del sexo opuesto?

3. ¿Qué artículos de su ropa no le gustan a sus padres?

4. ¿Qué artículos obtuvo porque varios de sus amigos lo tienen?

5. ¿Qué artículos son completamente diferentes a algo que otras personas que ud. conoce tienen o se han puesto?

6. ¿Qué artículos obtuvo porque eran de la marca "correcta"?

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